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# The Pan American Highway System

U. S. Department of Agriculture



The Pan American Highway dates from 1924, when a group of Latin-American engineers in Washington conceived the idea of connecting the South and Central American republics and the United States by a single highway.

The Latin-American countries and the United States have tackled the development of the highway together, working in the Pan American Highway Confederation. Construction began in 1930 and today the highway is more than two-thirds finished.

## Important facts about the highway:

- (1) Total length when completed, 11,357 miles.
- (2) Connects 17 countries.
- (3) Longest stretch now completed, 965 miles.

The linking of Central and South America by a through highway will provide an important addition to hemisphere defense. Travel and trade upon the highway will put United States dollars into the Latin-American republics and so enable them to buy more United States products.

United States expenditures for a survey of the route were instrumental in getting the North American section of the highway, to the Panama Canal, started in 1934. Recent loans to several of the Central American republics have stimulated work on this section of the highway. Each country bears the costs of constructing its section. The South American countries, several of which have also received United States credits for assistance in building the highway, are pushing construction vigorously.

Today around 71 percent of the highway's 11,000 miles is paved or driveable in any weather. About 19 percent is passable in dry weather only, and the remaining 10 percent consists of trails impassable to motor traffic, some of which are now being turned into roads.

The route is paved from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, on the United States border, to about 200 miles beyond Mexico City. From there, about 43 percent of the distance to the Panama Canal is driveable in any weather. Much of the remainder of this link is not driveable at all. No estimate is available, but a number of years will be required to complete this section. From the Panama Canal to Colombia is a bottleneck of swampland and jungle, as yet unexplored for road building. It was reported to have been crossed on foot for the first time by a white man in 1940. It is possible to ship a car from the United States or Mexico to Caracas, Venezuela, thus continuing on the highway in South America. Three-fourths of the route in South America is paved or driveable in any weather. Construction work is under way at various points.

The Pan American Highway Confederation maintains offices in Washington, D. C., and is prepared to answer all questions pertaining to the highway.

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# THE PAN AMERICAN HIGHWAY

For Hemisphere Travel, Commerce, and Defense.

